



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 19, 2024
6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting: Cole Middle School & Via Zoom

Minutes

Those in attendance

School Committee: Ms. Nicole Bucka, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. William Hangan; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Mr. Tim Munoz; Dr. Eugene Quinn

Additional Attendees: Dr. Brian Ricca, Superintendent; Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Neil Marcaccio, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk, Attorney Michael Polak

Absent: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair

I. Call to Order

Ms. Bucka called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. March 5, 2024 School Committee Meeting and Budget Workshop

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of March 5, 2024

B. March 11, 2024 Executive Session

C. March 11, 2024 Regular Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to table the approval of both sets of minutes from March 11, 2024.

V. Action Items

A. Approval of EGPS SY 24-25 School Calendar

Ms. Cecil-Karb made a motion to approve the calendar. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Podraza reviewed the highlights of the SY 24-25 school calendar. He explained that this calendar includes the state mandated instructional days and professional development days in the collective bargaining agreements. Student attendance was a driving factor in the development of the calendar which is based on RIDE's calendar.

- School will begin before Labor Day
- School start delay for Kindergarteners to allow for screenings
- School closures for primary day and election day
- No after school or evening activities and closure for 1 day in observance of Rosh Hashanah
- Two weeks off in December for students; 1 day of professional development for staff during the break
- End school before Juneteenth

Public Comment

Laura Gessman

Ms. Gessman inquired about sports and activities during Rosh Hashanah and asked whether Athletic Director Rhodes was involved in the calendar decisions. She said that two weeks was too long for a break in December and asked why students can't attend school on Monday, December 23.

Mr. Podraza said that AD Rhodes was a part of the calendar discussion. ADs throughout the state are doing more of the game scheduling for some Interscholastic sports. He added that no extra curricular activities will be scheduled during the observance of Rosh Hashanah.

Bethany Campbell

Ms. Campbell complained about the two week break in December and the starting of school before Labor Day. She said this calendar makes it difficult and costly for working parents. She has already made vacation plans for the end of August based upon last year's calendar.

Dana Polikoff

Ms. Polikoff said that she was unhappy with the two week break at Christmas. She also had concerns about starting at the end of August and has already planned a vacation for that week. Ms. Polikoff expressed appreciation that the observance of the Jewish holidays were part of the calendar.

Ms. Cecil-Karb stated that she was hesitant to override the administration's recommendation without knowing what went into creating the calendar. She shares the community's concerns but said that she can not substitute her judgment for the judgment of the people hired to make these decisions.

Dr. Ricca said that any change to the proposed calendar would have school ending after Juneteenth. Last year when the last day was June 20th, 35% of students did not show up for school. This is the best attempt at balancing the calendar. The State consistently tells districts that attendance matters and that needs to be considered when building the calendar. There is no perfect calendar however this one checks all of the legal requirements.

Mary Casperson via Zoom

Ms. Casperson asked whether February or April vacation could be eliminated.

Mr. Podraza explained that that was considered in the past and that when asked, the community split its support on the idea. There is also the effect that such a change and misalignment could have on faculty and staff who have children in other districts.

Ms. Polikoff asked whether there was consideration for combining the February and April vacations into two weeks in March to align with private schools.

Ms. Bucka expressed concern with any calendar that veered too far from the state calendar. She recommended getting community feedback before the development of next year's calendar.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the SY 24-25 School Calendar.

B. Approval of High School Roofing Replacement Bid and Contract - Patrick J. McKenna Roofing, Inc

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the bid and contract for the high school roof.

C. Approval of Internet Access Bid and Contract - Oshean

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the internet access bid and contract.

D. Approval of Out of State Field Trip - EGHS Track & Field Team, Penn Relays - Philadelphia, PA

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the out of state field trip.

Mr. Murphy added that this is a great event and that he attended while a student.

E. Approval of Alyson Powell and Kevin Murphy as the School Committee members on the School Construction Committee

Ms. Cecil-Karb made a motion to approve the appointments to the School Construction Committee. Dr. Quinn seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Murphy said that Mr. Munoz has done a fantastic job while serving on the school building committee; he has put a lot of work, time and effort into the committee and offered thoughtful opinions. Mr. Murphy thanked Mr. Munoz and Ms. Powell for the excellent work they did to lead the community forums.

Dr. Ricca said that it was Mr. Munoz who put together the model used to develop the community forum presentations. Mr. Munoz led the discussion with a focus on the educational rationale for the project.

Dr. Quinn stated that Mr. Munoz had been a good fit on the building committee.

Mr. Munoz thanked everyone for their kind works. He said that looking ahead, this body is going to make the most important decision related to significant changes to the district's schools. Mr. Munoz said that it was important to fight for the rights of school committees who enter into a contract with RIDE. Any change to the allocation is an amendment to a contract that only the school committee is party to. There will be pressure from people with different opinions.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to approve the appointments. Mr. Murphy abstained from the vote.

VI. Superintendent and Staff Reports

A. "What is Student Services" - Mr. Neil Marcaccio

Mr. Marcaccio explained that this would be a monthly discussion.

Each session will include:

- 1) 1-2 areas under the student services umbrella
- 2) Goal is to inform the school committee and community relative to:

- General understandings of the Who? Why? What? When? Where? & How? Of student services
- Connections to the “Strategic Plan” & “Vision of a Graduate”
- Increased connection to the 22-23 independent audit
- The budgeting process
- Legal/regulatory connections
- Contractual connections

School Committee Review Matrix
Priorities and Initiatives 2021-24

Month 1 - An Overview of Student Services

- 2,614 students, 400 staff
- IEP # 361, MLL # 52, 504# 310, MTSS # 328
- 3 prong: SEAC - Special Education - Transition Services
 - Teachers (36)
 - Paraeducators (70)
 - Occupational Therapists (5)
 - Adaptive PE (1.4)
 - Physical Therapists (1)
 - Assistive Technology (OT & Consult)
 - Music Therapy (contract)
 - Speech & Language Pathologist (7)
 - Psychologist (4.5)
 - Social Worker (3)
 - BCBA (1)
 - RBT (8) (Contract)
 - Contract Nurse (6)
 - Orientation & Mobility (Contract)
 - Teacher Visually Impaired (1) (Contract)
 - Consultants (5)
 - Agencies (4)
- MTSS
- Other Staff: School Nurse Teachers (6), Reading Specialists (6)
- 504
- Social Emotional Learning / Mental Health
- ALP, Homeless, Foster, Homeschool IEP
- MLL / ELL
- Policy, Regulation, Compliance, Legal
- Out of District Placements
- Grants
- Professional Development

Recap & Key Points

Exit Ticket

- One piece of new learning
- A wonder you have

Month 2 - Social Emotional Supports

Future Topics

- SEL & Mental Health
- TEAM day at each building
- BCBA and Behavioral Supports
- MLL / ELL - students whose first language is not English
- Grants & Student Services
- A week in the life of DSS
- ALP (Alternative Learning Plan)
- Out of District Placements
- 504: 2 prong
- Special Education Process - family
- Special Education Process - staff
- IDEA and other laws that drive Student Services work

Mr. Marcaccio said that all of these service providers are required in order to meet the students' educational needs. Committee members asked Mr. Marcaccio questions about student services.

Ms. Bucka stressed that student services is much more than services for a small population of students. She explained the framework system of addressing students' needs.

Public Comment

Laura Grassmere

Ms. Grassmere inquired about changing teaching approaches for students who are not traditional learners.

VII. Discussion and Possible Action

A. School Committee Discussion of Requested Elements for Final FY 25 Budget Presentation

EGSC Budget Discussion - Goal: Ensure consensus on our role in the process; Communicate (given this) what we'd like the final presentation to entail

- School Committee's Role in District Budget Process: RIGL 16-2-9
- 8 Characteristics of Effective School Committees & Our Own Self Evaluation (August 2023)
- Where does this committee see itself? Why?
- What does this mean for our role?
- Fist to Five Voting
- What does this mean for others' roles? Town Council, Administrative Leadership Team
- Given this, what do we want the final budget presentation to do /include?

(What) Is SC Role?

- Advocate for the budget, as a whole/"the ask", with the town
- Act as conduit between the district and the town
- Act as the point of accountability to the public (elected officials), responsible to the taxpayers
- Communicate the benefits of the schools to a broader stakeholder group
- Act as the voice of a broader group of stakeholders (i.e., taxpayers, students, staff); whereas, the leadership team may offer a more staff-oriented lens)
- Bring diverse lenses (e.g., each committee member brings their own expertise and professional lens) to the decision-making process
- Package the budget in the most effective manner for the town and also the broader public (e.g., framing of the context, prioritization of needs/wants, show effort to find efficiencies, comparison to other districts through the RIDE Accountability Report)
- Analyze assumptions, scrutinize difficult decisions (Strategic Plan as guide, and prioritize bigger budget impact areas (maybe top ten codes)

(What) is not SC Role?

- Micromanage
- To get into the minutiae of every line item or micromanage the district leadership (126 UCOA object codes, granular-level)
- Send UCOA spreadsheets to the Town
- To promote a Maintenance of Effort mindset

Mr. Munoz stated that it is the School Committee's role to present the budget to the Town and advocate for the District's needs. It is important to show the gains and losses for each portion of the budget.

Ms. Bucka said that the School Committee should be the ones to set the District's priorities.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out the need to make it clear to the administration what the focus of the budget presentation should be. Ms. Bucka said that she views that as the School Committee's role.

Mr. Munoz discouraged the use of UCOA codes to present the budget.

Dr. Ricca asked the Committee what it would like to have the leadership team bring to the April 9th meeting for the budget presentation. He sought a year over year increase for next year's budget which would help to guide the work that will be brought to the School Committee. Dr. Ricca expressed a willingness to develop a better timeline for next year's budget, allowing for deeper dives into targeted areas

The Committee discussed approaches to the development of the budget presentation. The consensus was to use the template created by Ms. Bucka to guide the budget presentation.

Mr. Hangan said that it is important to look at facilities because that is where cuts most often come from. The District needs to paint a picture of what projects would be deferred as a result of cuts.

VIII. Sub-Committees

- A. Building
- B. Policy
- C. Personnel

IX. Adjournment

At 9:18 pm, on a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 4-9-24